

Michael Sample: “He gave more than he received”

Noted Montana outdoors photographer and publisher Michael S. Sample died June 19 in Billings from a stabbing near his downtown office.

Sample was vice president of the Sample Foundation, a private family foundation that makes grants to nonprofit organizations in the areas of health, social welfare and services for underserved populations in Montana. The foundation’s founders, his father and step-mother Joseph and Miriam Sample, received the Governor’s Arts Award in 1997.

Sample was born in New Haven, CT, educated at Philips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire and Trinity College in Connecticut, and served in the United States Marine Corps Reserves. He first came to Montana in 1954, and an endless love affair began. While exploring the state, deepening his affection for it and practicing his photographic artistry, he met Barbara Maronick, a Great Falls native and, on Dec. 28, 1971, they were married. The next year, he published his first “Montana Calendar”; he would publish 43 more, including a 2015 one, released just prior to his death.

During his career, Sample contributed to countless magazines and published a number of coffee table books, including *Montana on My Mind* in 1987. Each year, he mentored younger photographers at the annual con-

vention of the North American Nature Photographers Association. His life and work were interrupted before the completion of what he believed to be his final book, a memoir in images that he intended to title *Montana from the Heart*.

In addition to his work as a photographer, Sample co-founded Falcon Press, a publishing house specifically for western authors and artists like himself. Launched by his *Anglers Guide to Montana*, the Falcon Guide series remains the definitive source in the state and now much of the country for outdoor enthusiasts.

Sample also served on the board for the Yellowstone Association, and supported countless other local and national organizations both privately and in his role as vice president of the Sample Foundation. He treasured the natural world, and did everything in his power to preserve it through both his pho-



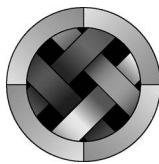
Michael Sample

tography and his philanthropy.

Sample loved others, especially his family, the same way he loved the state of Montana, by giving them everything he had to share: his resources, his seemingly inexhaustible supply of fine chocolate, his aesthetic vision, his exquisitely detailed and often remarkably lyrical stories of his photographic adventures, and his quirky, pure-hearted sense of fun. He loved front-yard Frisbee, family slideshows, delicate wildflowers and really bad puns; he loved attending Billings Rotary meetings, coaching youth soccer, and cheering for the Denver Broncos, the St. Louis Cardinals and all of his sports teams ...

While he never lost his sense of awe beneath a Montana sky and could often be heard exclaiming about the majesty of Montana’s mountain ranges, he also found beauty in less grand and otherwise unnoticed parts of the landscape he so loved. In general, Sample listened more than he spoke and gave more than he received.

– From the *Billings Gazette*, June 25



7

House committee votes to maintain current NEA funding

In a somewhat surprising development, the House Appropriations Committee voted July 15 to approve a budget for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) at its current funding level, \$146 million, for fiscal year 2015. The action comes less than a week after the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee voted to reduce funding for the NEA to \$138 million.

The decision to restore funding for the NEA was made during a mark-up meeting of the full committee, where an amendment making “non-controversial changes” was passed. Among those changes to the bill was a provision maintaining funding for the NEA at \$146 million.

With the bill’s passage out of committee, the legislation will now be considered on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, where it is certainly possible that an amendment could be introduced to once again reduce funding for the NEA.

– From the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

CONDOLENCES

The family and friends of musician **Mark Wittman**. He died July 20 of complications associated with long-term cancer. He was 61 years old. Wittman was born in Billings on June 25, 1953, graduated from Sentinel High School in Missoula and later attended classes at The University of Montana. He was a professional drummer, starting his music career in high school, and performing with numerous bands, included the Montana Band, Rob Quist and Great Northern, Montana Rose, Norton Buffalo, the Live Wire Choir, BMW, The Saddle Tramps, The Fossils, and many others. He also toured with the Steve Miller Band and became a popular Nashville studio musician, playing with artists including Keith Urban, Jeff Hanna of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and Montana-based songwriter Kostas. Wittman also worked as a ski instructor throughout his career, attaining a level-three certification from the Professional Ski Instructors of America. He began teaching skiing at Marshall Ski School in Missoula in 1974 and later taught for the Big Mountain and Bridger Bowl ski schools. In his younger years, he was active with the Boy Scouts of America, achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. His many hobbies included golfing, hunting, fishing, gardening, gourmet cooking and boating. He will always be remembered for his sense of humor, a friendly smile and the love he had for everyone. A memorial celebration will be held at 2 p.m. Sept. 7 at the Sweetwater Ranch near Creston (RSVP at 406-260-1525).

– From the *Missoulian*, Aug. 6

Condolences to the family and friends of **Mary Olga Crippen**. She died May 15 of pancreatic cancer at age 75. She was born in Perry, OK, and leaves behind her husband of 52 years, Bruce D. Crippen, their four children and spouses, nine grandchildren, her brothers, sister, multiple cousins, nieces and nephews and friends. “The Montana Arts Council was enormously lucky to have Mary serve as a council member with us for ten years,” said Arni Fishbaugh, director of the agency. “Mary’s commitment to the arts was lifelong, and she was one of the most gracious, lovely, helpful and insightful members we have ever had. I always thought that Mary would have to have been one of the most wonderful mothers in the world because of the way that she cared about who and what she believed in. Her kindness and wisdom helped the arts council through many dark times in our myriad of funding crises. Her husband Bruce, former Montana Senate leader, was also incredibly helpful to the agency, and Mary roped him into several projects on behalf of the arts council, luckily, for us. Bruce has always been an ardent champion for the arts, and his counsel and help has always been something we treasure – just like we did Mary. The state has lost one of its loveliest citizens with Mary’s passing.”

The family and friends of photographer and arts supporter **Robert Oliver Taunt III**. He died Jan. 15, 2014, in Monterey, CA. Taunt taught, worked for the California Legislature, and was active in Greenpeace before moving to Montana in 1984. A consummate photographer, his photographs of marine mammal exploitation were published nationwide. After moving to Helena with his wife, Suzanne, he became active in the Nature Conservancy and the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts, serving on their boards with dedication for many years, and continued his passion for



Mark Wittman

sas City, KS, and served four years in the Navy as a torpedo man on the submarine USS George C. Marshall. During that time, he taught himself to play guitar; he was also proficient on the harmonica, a family talent passed down from his father. After the Navy, Davis studied art at Oregon State University, and received his teaching degree in art education. After teaching four years in Waldport, OR, he ventured to Coeur d’Alene in 1983 and was hired as a middle school art teacher at Canfield Middle School. There he met his life partner, Margery Christensen, who had an adjoining art room in the same school where they taught for 25 years. They also shared their music, with Margery joining him on flute. After retiring, they moved to Polson and had five fun-filled years immersed in their new community. Davis was a member of the Sandpiper Art Gallery and planned the yearly Worldwide Paint Out for local artists each fall. His art talents had no boundaries, and his favorite mediums were watercolor and acrylic paint. If he wasn’t involved in an art project, he was playing music, riding his Ural sidecar motorcycle, snowboarding, spending time with his Elks buddies, camping and fly fishing, and living life to the fullest.

– From the *Missoulian*, Aug. 8

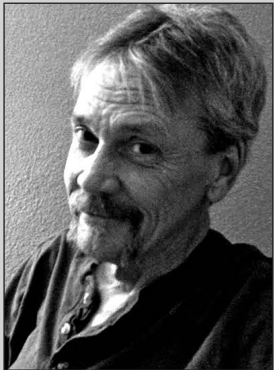
The family and friends of **Peter James “Jamie” Kelly**. The writer, journalist and jazz pianist died Aug. 7 in Missoula. He was 46. Born in Helena, Kelly spent most of his life in Missoula. He inherited his love for baseball from his dad and considered it to be a perfect, almost mystical game. As a freshman in high school, he discovered the piano and from the moment his fingers first touched the keys, it became his. He was a graduate of The University of Montana School of Journalism and enjoyed a long career at the *Missoulian* as a copy editor, reporter, and author of his memorable and thought-provoking column, “Fatuous



Jamie Kelly

Twaddle,” which inspired laughter, tears and occasional anger from his loyal readers. He graduated at the top of his class in May from UM with a paralegal degree and had recently begun working for St. Peter Law Offices in Missoula.

– From the *Missoulian*, Aug. 10



John Davis